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Sam Houston and the War of Independence in Texas. By ALFRED M. WILLIAMS. Boston and New York, Houghton, Mifflin & Co., 1893.—405 pp.

Political writers of the thirties and forties were not discriminating biographers. Party bias warped their view of the characters of men identified with a cause that the authors championed or opposed, and Houston's biographies, written for the most part during this period of strong party feeling, offer no exception to the general rule. To steer between Abolitionist bitterness and crude Southern hero-worship has been the aim of the present author, and he has undoubtedly succeeded in giving us a fairer and more complete account than any hitherto published.

The first five chapters of the book are a straightforward and concise narrative of Houston's life till the time of his emigration to Texas, including his brief military record, his political career in Kentucky, and his sudden withdrawal from his friends to live among the Cherokees. The charges of personal dishonesty made against Houston when, after exposing the frauds of certain swindling Indian agents, he bid for the contract of supplying the tribe at what was considered an exorbitant price, are dismissed by the author as groundless and are imputed to the malice of the Indian ring. Yet these accusations have been often repeated, and are thought worthy of mention by von Holst in his *Constitutional History of the United States*. While defending Houston's uprightness in money matters, the author does not spare his obvious failings in other respects, and quotes several incidents which bear witness to an extravagant vanity and a violent temper. Houston's work in Texas is well described. His tact in dealing with the dissensions and jealousies that distracted the Texan government, his skill in overcoming the obstacles thrown in his way by the rashness and selfishness of his subordinates, and his courage and ability in the conduct of the war, receive full credit. The events of the war are told with some fullness of detail, but the vexed questions that relate to the attitude of the United States throughout this period receive but scanty treatment. The author does not lose sight of the fact that his purpose is primarily biographical, and he is not led away by the attractions of the great political and constitutional questions with which his subject is connected. While the student of constitutional history, therefore, will find in this work but little that is novel or suggestive, the reader of popular biography will find it a clear, unprejudiced and entertaining narrative.

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